

Ludo ABICHT and Hendrik OPDEBEECK

The Point of Philosophy

An Introduction for the Human Sciences



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Introduction

Most people occasionally ask the central philosophical questions about the origins of the world and mankind, about the difference between good and evil, and about our very sense of existence. You really want to better understand how the world and man are actually functioning. Then you want to know the best way to survive and to act. And finally, you want to get a clear insight into the sense, the point, of life itself. Instead of dealing with as many philosophers who have struggled with these questions as possible, this introduction to philosophy for the human sciences strives, rather, to present a readable pattern for dealing with these philosophical questions. It is a kind of tool that will enable readers to proceed down their own path. Thus, there are regular moments in this book that we deal with the various ways in which “in-sight, out-look, and making-sense” surface in philosophy in history. This reading pattern turns out to be a useful tool to keep track of the central questions in the midst of the vast diversity of potential philosophical answers.

It is our explicit purpose to make people sufficiently curious as to entice them to read the original philosophical texts for themselves. For a summary is always something like a translation that can never replace the direct confrontation with the original text. Then you’ll discover soon enough that there may exist different, sometimes even contradictory, parallel interpretations of the same text. In this way, the ages-old dialogue between thinkers and their readers or listeners continues, which is about the best thing one can wish for philosophy, the “love of wisdom.” In fact, even this book is a product of such dialogue, here between an atheist philosopher (Ludo Abicht) and an agnostic but religious philosopher (Hendrik Opdebeeck), accurately edited by Ludo’s son and native speaker Bart Abicht.

Ultimately, this book confronts the reader, time and again, with questions on the concrete economic, social, and ecological boundaries of our society. This is how philosophy not only proves necessary with regard to the ancient questions, but also in order to obtain rationally argued answers to very concrete and current social and ethical questions.